

While They Waited

By Virginia Leila Wentz

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He jumped out of the little country rig, leaving it in the hands of a street-faced boy, and rushed up to the ticket agent just as his train was pulling out from the station.

"Pshaw!" he exclaimed, and then, to the sleepy-looking, congested ticket agent, "When does the next train leave for New York?"

"Two hours," replied that individual laconically. Maverick Oliver wasn't a man to cry over spilled milk. He sat himself philosophically down in a shady recess of the waiting room and extracted a notebook. He would look over some memoranda he had jotted down for his solicited article for the Review and then take a stroll along the country hedges. There seemed to be a rather attractive bit of woodland just beyond.

"How long must I wait for connections for Roseliff?"

Something in the woman's voice, half contralto, half alto, made the man with the notebook suddenly start. He'd been so engrossed in his memoranda that he had scarcely noticed the incoming train, with all its attendant bustle. Now, however, a single woman's voice made him start and caused the Review article to be as far from his thoughts as the military affairs of nations B. C.

The woman's back was turned toward Oliver, but he knew it was Eleanor. Who else in all the world had that queenly carriage, that well-sloped shoulder, that bewitching mass of coiled chestnut hair?

"For Roseliff?" came the richest agent's monotonous voice as he crossed his wrinkled forehead with the back of his hand. "A half hour, ma'am. Train's sixteen minutes late." The woman turned impatiently away from the window.

It was then they came face to face. "You?" cried Oliver, springing up. She stood there in the barren waiting room, filling its emptiness with the richness of her charm. To the man's hungry eyes she was food of the most satisfying as well as of the most delicate sort.

She did not hold out her hand. Nevertheless she encountered him not in her old imperious fashion, but with a smile including him in some mood too large to be wholly personal.

"How you have changed, Eleanor!" he cried involuntarily. "Are you, too, waiting for a train?" she answered softly in return. "Is this where you go?"

"Sweetest New York," said Oliver. "And you?"

"To Roseliff, fourteen miles east." Oliver took her umbrella and tiny suit case from her, and then they walked slowly up and down the platform together, man and woman, instead of husband and wife, held apart by some strange fiat that they both accepted.

In the fields, all around, the buttercups were golden and the wild carrot was in white, lancelike flower. Over in the woods beyond some song birds, waking from their summer slumber, were beginning to warble. A group of traveling men was lounging on the railing at the far end of the platform, expectorating copiously to punctuate the points in their stories.

Oliver dusted the platform steps at the other end of the walk with his handkerchief, and the woman sat serenely down, her delicate profile outlined against the clear blue of the sky like some exquisite cameo. She had always been beautiful, though. It wasn't that which made the man exclaim again irresponsibly:

"You've changed so, Eleanor!" It was true. It was no mere fancy of his imaginative writer's eye that discovered new meanings in the face before him. It had undergone a vague but very gracious transformation.

"Changed?" repeated she, with a curious tenderness. "I've tried to change—tried. I've tried to understand? Since last winter, when we agreed to separate, I've been trying—so hard, Maverick—to take control of my own stunted nature, turn it where it twists."

"Dear," broke in Oliver, with a bitter humility, "we were both to blame—both, do you hear? And I'm afraid you've been cleverer than I if you've unsaid things where they failed to fit the pattern. I've not changed much, I'm afraid."

Under her black lashes the woman smiled at him with a reverence he might have translated (had he been high plumed) as some loyal acquiescence in his former state. What Oliver felt now, however, was curiosity in his young wife, not in himself. So—

"Tell me," he burst forth, "what has changed you so?"

She rolled up her absurd little handkerchief into a stick, throwing it over her knee, pulled it unconsciously by both ends, gazing steadfastly into the blue distance above Oliver's head.

"I don't know whether I ought to tell you," she began. Oliver recalled that delicious little habit she used to have of tempting the fate shyly, of hesitating when she meant to be right down outrageous.

"Of course you ought," he urged. "You always do in the end, you know, and it will save time." Under her playfulness he had allowed himself to grow light-headed.

"Well, then," she began, but her voice trailed off vaguely. Her cheeks took on a pliker bloom; she forgot the handkerchief and finished her thought

with a mature dignity that became her like the armor of her sex.

"Our little boy, Maverick—our little boy has changed me!"

"Ah! Our boy?" Oliver broke off abruptly, for something had suddenly snatched him by the throat.

The woman hastily brushed her tears away and went on practically: "You'd be proud of him, Maverick—such strong, agile limbs—and he has the will of a little savage."

"Let me see," Oliver said brusquely, stooping over the platform's edge and plucking a buttercup stalk that had ambitiously grown up from the gravel. "He must be eleven months now."

"Yes. He was five when—when you last saw him." She kept her eyes deliberately fixed upon the high railroad trestles in the blue distance. "Do you know, he's been such a help to me. I've told him all the things I wanted to tell you—told him that his mother had been a vain, silly, selfish tyrant who, coming straight from the convent, wanted to have everything this world had to give—money, fame, position—all those things that are bought in the market place—and had wanted to buy them with his father's conscience."

Over the trestles the smoke of the incoming train was seen. There were the usual bustle, snoring of hand bags, carting of trunks, and so on. Whatever swift, mutual, soul-revelations Oliver and his wife had been on the point of making dissolved into nothingness, jarred by the prosaic commotion of traffic. It was a pity, too, for with Eleanor's last words her face had melted into a pensive sweetness, her exquisite mouth had taken on sudden quivering little curves. She had seemed about to say, "Ambition, selfishness, the cruelty of pride—all these things have gone, Maverick."

She didn't say that, however. Instead she rose from the wooden step which her husband had dusted for her. "I'm glad you found me changed," she said merely. Something in the man's honest soul overrode.

"I, too—too, Eleanor, will change," cried he. "Ah, you've no need to," answered she, meeting honesty with honesty. "You've been growing like the trees yonder"—she nodded in the direction of the woodland—"for years, straight and strong. I had to be pruned. I had."

The train's screeching whistle deadened her words. It came rushing in and stopped. Oliver still held Eleanor's tiny suit case and umbrella in his hand. There was a confused sound of greeting to the passengers who had alighted and the clamor of hotel runners and bus drivers.

"Now, then, step lively!" cried the brakeman as the last much bundled old woman descended, allowing the impatient traveling men to climb aboard. Oliver and his wife were the last of the crowd.

He helped her aboard, found her chair for her in the parlor car, then turned miserably to meet her eyes. "All aboard!" came the strident voice of the conductor. The train began to move almost imperceptibly.

"Goodby!" cried Oliver, battling with strong emotion, but conscious of the increasing movement of the train. Then as he bent over her seat the woman laid a trembling hand on his arm, and her eyes were brimming with slow tears.

"Goodby, Maverick! Don't you want to go with me to our baby?"

"Good heavens! Eleanor, do I want to?"

Some lonely passengers at the other end of the car wondered what had suddenly illumined the man's handsome face with that electric thrill of joy. Then the telegraph poles began to whiz by. Oliver had forgotten New York.

A Famous French Palace. The Chateau de Rambouillet has a history remote from the literary fad of the eighteenth century which has made the word Rambouillet significant of an epoch of French culture. It was in this chateau that Francis I. breathed his last and Charles X. was deserted in his death. It is not generally known, however, how Louis XVI. became its proprietor. Until 1788 Rambouillet belonged to the Duc de Penthièvre, grandson of Louis XIV. and Mme. de Montespan. Louis XVI. wished very much to possess it. This desire became a fixed passion, which was augmented by his dislike of its owner. But one day he declared, "The possession of Rambouillet would be the happiness of my life." To which the duke graciously replied: "God forbid that I should be the cause of your unhappiness. Since Rambouillet is yours on your own terms." The price fixed was 11,000,000 francs, of which 6,000,000 were paid the next day in gold from the royal treasury.

Miss Noah. A child was brought to a Yorkshire vicar for baptism. As he was told that the name was to be Noah, he naturally referred to the infant as "he" in the course of the service. Soon he felt his surprise pulled by one of the women, who whispered to him that "it was a lass."

"But Noah is not a girl's name," said the parson.

"Yes, it is," spoke up the child's father.

An adjournment was made to the vestry to settle the point. The father said that whenever he had a child to be named he opened the Bible and chose the first name of the proper sex that met his eye. The clergyman insisted that in the present case a mistake had been made, whereupon the father opened the Bible at Numbers xxvi, 33, and read, "The names of the daughters of Zelophehad were Noah," etc.

There was no more to be said.

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Trinity church is valued at \$12,500,000. This estimate includes the land occupied by the churchyard. It is in the most valuable part of New York, if not in the most valuable division of property in the world.

St. Paul's church is valued at \$5,500,000. Grace church, at what was once described as the "head of Broadway," is valued at \$600,000.

The First Presbyterian church, on Fifth avenue, between Eleventh and Twelfth streets, is valued at \$750,000. St. Mark's church, on Second avenue, an old landmark in that neighborhood, is valued at \$275,000.

The Marble Collegiate church, Fifth avenue and Twenty-ninth street, is valued at \$1,000,000.

The Church of St. Paul the Apostle (the Paulist church), at Fifty-ninth street and Columbus avenue, is valued at \$700,000.

The West Presbyterian church, on West Forty-second street, is valued at \$450,000. St. Thomas' at \$1,700,000 and the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian church, 9 and 11 West Fifty-ninth street, at \$1,000,000.

The valuation of the Temple Emanuel is \$1,530,000, of St. Patrick's cathedral \$6,000,000, of the B'nai Jeshurun synagogue \$300,000, of the Temple Beth-El, at the corner of Fifth avenue and Seventy-sixth street, \$1,300,000, of the Broadway Tabernacle, Broadway and Fifty-sixth street, \$700,000 and of the Christian Scientist church, Central Park West and Sixty-eighth street, \$300,000.—New York Sun.

PRACTICAL PICTURES.

Old Fashioned Ornaments and a Very Substantial Dinner.

There is a practical minded millionaire who has invented a substitute for valuable pictures which it is hoped will not commend itself to others. He has had a large number of bank notes framed, and these are hung upon the wall where the pictures should be.

In the drawing room is one frame that contains a bank note for \$100,000, and he says: "There is the money in case I find a picture which is sufficiently valuable to pay that price for it. Meanwhile the note tells its own tale and saves me from explaining to my visitors that 'this picture cost so much,' as most other rich men do."

"The chief pleasure of these collectors appears to arise not from the beauty of the work, but from the cost of it; then why not have checks or bank notes for a large sum hung on the walls, as I do? Besides, I find that it is much more interesting to my visitors, for most of them look long and carefully at the bank notes who would but glance at the work of art."

"This eccentric man gave a dinner on the same principle. In the soup plates there was no soup, but sovereigns for fish were served five-pound notes, for game checks and for sweets shares in a thriving company, and there was not a guest who did not enjoy this entertainment more than any he or she had ever before been present at.—London Truth.

Dean Swift on Spellings. Dean Swift roundly denounced the poets of his day who had introduced the "barbarous custom of abbreviating words to fit them to the measure of their verses." Swift instances "drugs" and "disturb'd" as mortal offenses. The custom so introduced had begun to dominate prose. Another cause—borrowed, Swift suggested, from the clipping process which he held had contributed to the mutilation of the language, "is a foolish opinion advanced of late years that we ought to spell exactly as we speak; which, besides the obvious inconvenience of utterly destroying our etymology, would be a thing we should never see the end of."

Makes in Railway Journeys. The idea that the man who goes on a railway journey takes his life in his hand and is rather more likely than not to meet with an untimely death at the first curve the train negotiates is scarcely borne out by the fact that the chances against any one passenger meeting his death on the railway are 36,000,000 to 1. This immunity from disaster reflects considerable credit upon the companies, but still more upon engine drivers and signalmen, whose skill and care are the main factors in the safety of the passenger.—London Court Journal.

Reason, reason as much as you like, but beware of thinking that it answers to everything, suffices for everything, satisfies everything. This mother loses her child. Will reason comfort her? Does cool reason counsel the inspired poet, the heroic warrior, the lover? Reason guides but a small part of many, and that is the least interesting. The rest obey feeling, true or false, and passion, good or bad.

Taking Him Down. "Criticism was pleased to say that my play had few equals as a bit of realism," remarked young De Rifter. "He said even more than that," said Pepprey.

"Indeed?"

"Yes," he added, "and positively no inferiority."—Exchange.

Carelessness—Somewhere. Gladys—Mamma, can't see anybody today. She's upstairs with the new baby. You see, they sent her a girl when she'd ordered a boy, and she's so disappointed she's sick.—Puck.

The men who go through life with chips on their shoulders always avoid meeting the right man.—New York News.

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